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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE 1 JUNE DOMINICAN ELECTION

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

State Department review completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
26 May 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

The 1 June Dominican Election

SUMMARY

The outcome of next Wednesday's election in the Dominican Republic probably rests with the so-called "silent vote," whose possessors have yet to demonstrate enthusiasm for either Joaquin Balaguer or Juan Bosch.

*Produced by the Office of Current Intelligence

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1. The outcome of next Wednesday's general election probably hangs on the "silent vote"--the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of eligible voters who have yet to show enthusiasm for either the Reformist Party's Joaquin Balaguer or the Dominican Revolutionary Party's Juan Bosch but are likely to opt for one over the other in the closing hours of the campaign. The major contenders plan to campaign through to the very eve of the balloting. Victory could be swung by a last-minute, unpredictable development. The Dominican Republic is in its rainy season. A heavy, sustained downpour could result in a lighter than expected vote outside the cities--to Balaguer's disadvantage.

2. On balance, Balaguer probably should be rated a slight favorite. Most observers judge that the race will be close; the intensity with which both sides are seeking to enlist the support of the electorate suggests that neither is confident of victory.

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3. Of the 11 parties taking part in the campaign, only the Reformist Party and the Dominican Revolutionary Party are expected to draw appreciable votes. Those small parties which have not already allied themselves with either Balaguer or Bosch are almost sure to do so in the next few days. The inconsequential grouping around the third presidential candidate, Rafael Bonnelly, is expected to reach a last-minute agreement with Balaguer. Should Bonnelly stay in the race to the finish, Bonnelly would pull votes away from Balaguer, which could mean a Bosch victory in an extremely close race. The militant 14th of June Revolutionary Movement, which failed to obtain the Central Electoral Board's permission to split a ballot between the PRD's national candidates and its local candidates, seems likely to withdraw in favor of Bosch and the PRD slate.

4. Balaguer probably will receive the support of all parties right of center, except for those voters--thought to be numerically insignificant--who still are embittered by his role in the dictatorial Trujillo regime (1930-61). Balaguer is one of the most widely known men in the country. From

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this alone, he will secure the votes of a large block of rural workers; he is conceded to have an edge over Bosch in the countryside. Balaguer also has fallen heir to all those elements in Dominican society which dislike or distrust Bosch, including the military, probably a majority of women, the Church, people who remember the Trujillo era nostalgically, and much of the country's business community. His supporters range from people who favor the status quo to those who desire moderate change and reform. Because the rural areas are overly represented in both congressional chambers, Balaguer's party has a good chance of dominating the legislative branch regardless of how Balaguer fares personally.

5. Bosch enjoys the support of all the leftist parties--ranging from his own Dominican Revolutionary Party to the Revolutionary Social Christians and the country's two Communist parties, whose backing was unsolicited. He also has the support of ultra-nationalists, many students, intellectuals, organized labor, and the "constitutionalist" element from last year's revolution. A majority of the urban population, especially in the capital and the larger provincial cities (estimated to be 30 percent of the vote) appears to favor Bosch. In general, he has the vote of those Dominicans who are discontented with present conditions and look forward to change--at a revolutionary pace, if necessary.

6. The legal basis for next week's election is the 3 September 1965 Institutional Act written by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Organization of American States and agreed to by the leading participants in last year's fighting.

7. The elections are being administered by a three-man Central Electoral Board which has almost complete autonomy under the Provisional Government and whose impartiality has not been questioned by either major candidate. The Board has proved jealous of its prerogatives, but is receiving technical assistance from a group of OAS election experts. The Inter-American Human Rights Commission is on hand to investigate any allegations that civil rights are being violated, and a group of 50 OAS-appointed observers will be on hand. Some unofficial foreign

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observers who are disposed toward Bosch will also be present.

8. Voters will be provided with an indivisible color-keyed ballot for presidential, congressional, and municipal positions. To receive his ballot, each voter must produce a civil registration card, a cedula, which is required of all Dominicans of 18 or over. However, not all adult Dominicans have cedula: it has been estimated that as many as one third of the potential voters in certain areas lack them. This is expected to hurt Balaguer, who has charged that many fraudulent cedula were issued during the first two months of last year's revolution and that many of the issuing offices currently are controlled by Bosch partisans. Balaguer has suggested that the cedula be eliminated as a requirement for voting--presumably to permit a last-minute turnout of rural voters who have been too apathetic to date to apply for them.

9. Both candidates clearly dominate their respective political organizations, chiefly because they are the only nationally known figures in their parties and those parties' only hope for a victory at the polls. Both the PR and the PRD have established local committees throughout the country, although Bosch's PRD appears somewhat better staffed, more militant, and more articulate. Both have made extensive use of billboards and other visual propaganda in the more populated areas--the PRD somewhat more so than the PR.

10. There have been three distinct phases to the campaign. The Institutional Act's provision that active politicking not begin until 90 days prior to the date set for the election notwithstanding, Joaquin Balaguer and the Reformist Party have been running for office since late last year. Unlike Bosch, Balaguer was an avowed candidate from the moment of his return to the Dominican Republic at the end of June and pressed the Dominican Provisional Government and the Ad Hoc Committee of the Organization of American States to schedule elections. With no declared opposition in the field against him, Balaguer dominated the early months of the contest.

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Bosch's long-delayed return to Santo Domingo from San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he had sat out last year's revolt, and his self-imposed refuge in a suburb of the capital, cost him followers during the same period. But Bosch still had considerable political muscle--as he demonstrated in February by calling for a successful general strike which succeeded where earlier strikes mounted without Bosch's or the PRD's open endorsement failed.

11. Once Bosch formally accepted the nomination on 10 April, Easter, with a speech comparing the PRD's revival with the liturgical theme of the Risen Christ, he captured the headlines and the public eye. For various reasons, some obscure, Balaguer's campaign seemed to falter: PR rallies met with minimal turnouts, and there were reports that PR stalwarts were hard pressed for campaign funds, lacked decisive leadership, and were discouraged. Balaguer rallied, however, and within the past week his campaign managers have told US Embassy officers that the party's coffers are full.

12. The major candidates have differed markedly in their behavior during the campaign, and there is no reason to look for a last-minute change. Heavily guarded, Balaguer has made an active road tour the backbone of his efforts, addressing as much of the electorate as possible in person. He has sought to convey the image of a mature, judicious man of piety and compassion for the poor and underprivileged. In contrast, Juan Bosch--who suffers from an acute fear that he will be killed--has remained in the sanctuary of his fortress-like home in Santo Domingo, recording for rebroadcast almost daily radio speeches or homilies couched in the popular idiom and replete with colorful folk stories. Bosch's charismatic qualities and unquestioned ability to capture the attention of the more unsophisticated voters have stood him well. His aversion to personal appearances and association in many minds with revolutionary change and violence are imponderables.

13. Both Balaguer and Bosch have directed their speeches at the uncommitted voter. Each, especially Bosch, has taken a far more moderate stand on controversial issues than he had previously expounded. In

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the quest for votes, both men have tended to gloss over the real issues which confront the nation--such as unemployment and underemployment, an unfavorable balance of trade and the need for a currency devaluation, agrarian and educational reform, the future of government-owned industries and the size of the military establishment. Negative issues, such as the candidates' backgrounds, charges of electoral fraud and voter intimidation, the partisanship of government agencies and the role of the military, have dominated the campaign debate.

14. Balaguer has devoted a good many of his speeches to "proving" that his supporters are being disenfranchised or that Bosch partisans are being registered illegally. He has paid little attention to enunciating an economic program and has been guilty to a greater extent than Bosch of offering his listeners pie in the sky. The implication that a vote for Balaguer and the PR is a vote for stability and that a vote for Bosch and the PRD is a vote for chaos is implicit in much of what Balaguer has said. As the campaign closes, Balaguer's vice-presidential running mate has characterized the race as "between a repetition of the Cuban experience and the establishment of a representative democracy."

15. Bosch has claimed from the outset that the political climate in the Dominican Republic does not favor a free election. For this he blames the Dominican military and police, and has threatened and may again threaten to withdraw from the race at the last minute unless the military are curbed, as Provisional President Garcia Godoy has promised they will be. The PRD has sought to burn Balaguer for his association with the Trujillo regime. Bosch's radio addresses are interlaced with pointed reminders of the tyrannical aspects of the Trujillo era. This contrasts with the PRD's tactics in 1962, when Bosch avoided the issue of the Trujillos and presumably inherited a large share of the vote from those Dominicans who had reason to fear an anti-Trujillo purge once a new government was elected. As a campaign tactic, anti-Trujilloism does not impress observers on the scene as being nearly as effective as the PR's counterthrust of painting Bosch as soft on Communism. There is evidence that this charge is

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hurting Bosch among the rural voters. The number of speeches Bosch devoted to outlining his non-Communist stance and his emphatic rejection of public support by the Communist-dominated 14th of June Revolutionary Movement indicate that he is aware of his vulnerability and that he has suffered.

16. Extremists of both sides have resorted to physical intimidation and more subtle forms of pressure to influence the voters, but their efforts probably cancel each other out. The secrecy of the voting booth will in any case afford the voter anonymity. About 1.2 million out of an estimated 1.6 million eligible voters are expected to go to the polls next Wednesday. Two weeks ago, local observers detected tentative indications of a Balaguer upswing; however, neither candidate can be said to be riding a bandwagon. Bosch's 48-hour threat to withdraw from the race on the night of 17 May unless the Provisional Government curbed the military and put an end to alleged extremist attacks on PRD members captured the headlines and may have been intended to accomplish no more than that. By confining the troops to the barracks for the balance of the campaign, Provisional President Garcia Godoy in effect deprived Bosch of a last-minute "issue." But Bosch is not easily checkmated and may again threaten to pull out right up to the moment the voting begins. In radio speeches of the past two days, Bosch has talked at some length about the predicted size of the vote--emphasizing that the final tally should not run above 1.2 million. Since most observers calculate that there probably are at least 1,500,000 potential voters, Bosch may be laying the grounds for an expedient charge of fraud in the counting after the polls close.

17. Joaquin Balaguer and the Reformist Party have agreed to accept the outcome of the election and, if necessary, to play the role of a loyal opposition. Despite the efforts of US Ambassador to the OAS Ellsworth Bunker and others, Bosch has declined to make a parallel commitment--ostensibly because public disclosure of such a compact would discourage his supporters. Nor has Bosch agreed to offer posts in any PRD-dominated government to the

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Reformistas, as Balaguer seems likely to do for the PRD if he is elected.

18. In the waning days of the campaign, party rallies have been marred by a number of clashes between Balaguer and Bosch supporters and young toughs whom we surmise to be members of the militant 14th of June Revolutionary Movement. Such incidents afford demagogues of all persuasions a chance to inflame the mob and present the risk of a major confrontation, which could well lead to precipitate action by the edgy Dominican military and police.

19. The Central Electoral Board has promised to tabulate the votes within 24 hours after the polls close at 7:00 PM EDT.

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